

The South Danvers Observer

Of Humble Origins

The South Danvers Observer is published quarterly.

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"The Southern army are not going to let us pass through Baltimore, so we are going to have to fight our way there. Most of us are armed with a six-barreled pistol and a rifle musket. We are ready to meet them. All the South Danvers boys are on hand. This company, on account of its Zouave drill, attracts great attention. We are under guard all the time when not marching. We had a great reception at every place on the road last night. They fired a salute at almost every place."

April 18, 1861 letter from
Moses Shackley to his parents

Summer 1895—Our recent celebration of the centennial of George Peabody's birth has recalled many pleasant memories of his life and generosity. His gifts extended far beyond the borders of our town and commonwealth, to both north and south, as well as to those across the ocean. In fact, the name of Peabody has grown so far and wide as to have become synonymous with generosity and that noble profession, philanthropy.

While George Peabody began his life from the most humble of families, through hard work and sacrifice, he rose to national and world-wide prominence. Many of our citizens also began their lives in the same humble circumstances. And while they did not become as famous as George Peabody, they have also made their mark upon this town. It is to all of them this newsletter is dedicated.

Moses Shackley, 1843-1864

—Though Moses and Almira (Maxwell) Shackley were born in Maine, it wasn't long after their move to South Danvers that they decided they had found a place they could call home. All four of the Shackley children were born here, but they lost an infant son and daughter not long after their births. And their daughter Dorcas died at the age of 3. Only their son Moses, born June 23, 1843, survived to adulthood.

Like many other sons, Moses worked for his father, who owned a livery stable in town. But when word arrived of the attack on Fort Sumter, Moses never hesitated. Though not yet 18, he immediately enlisted with the 8th Massachusetts Regiment. Formed on April 16th, the regiment left at once for Washington D.C. to defend the city. There was little training for the recruits and no concept of just how long the

war would drag on.

At the beginning of the war, many conflicting and false reports flew over the telegraph wires. This made the work of reporting reliable and accurate information nearly impossible. To compensate for that, the *South Danvers Wizard* led the way by turning to the soldiers themselves for news of the war. Scarcely a week after Moses' enlistment, his first letter was published in the *Wizard*.

In it, he described his regiment's attempt to pass through Baltimore on April 18th, never imagining that only a day later 4 men from the 6th Massachusetts Regiment would be killed in the ensuing riot.

After Moses' 3 months enlistment ended, he returned home for only a few short weeks. Realizing that the war would continue far longer than anyone had anticipated, Moses enlisted in the 19th

Massachusetts Regiment for 3 years as a wagoner. His work—to keep the wagons of food and supplies always within reach of the men—was exhausting. Especially since his regiment engaged in nearly 30 battles during the years of his enlistment, including the Battles of Antietam and Gettysburg. Moses' service was exemplary and he soon left his work with the wagons and rose through the ranks to become a 2nd Lieutenant.

After his three year enlistment with the 19th regiment ended, Moses did not consider his work competed. Instead, he returned home to urge other young men to join in the fight and ultimately decided to enlist once again, this time with the 59th Massachusetts regiment. His service for the 59th was short-lived, however. On May 12, 1864 during the Battle of Spotsylvania, Moses was wounded. He died the next day. And sadly, his body was never brought home.

William Blaney Hammond, 1834-1895

—Though William Blaney Hammond was born in Salisbury, Massachusetts, his family spent a number of years in South Danvers, leaving their mark upon the town.

William was the fourth child and oldest son of Edward and Nancy (Blaney) Hammond. He was born on Sept. 13, 1834. His parents were married in Marblehead in 1827 and remained there during the early years of their marriage. By 1840, they had settled in Danvers, where Edward worked as a painter, though the town census referred to him as a restorator.

Many of their family resided in nearby Lynn, which accounts for the fact that the births of their last three children occurred in that city.

It is unfortunate that our high

school did not open its doors until 1850, because William would have enjoyed the challenge. What education he did receive was put to good use when he went to work for local newspapers as a printer.

His first years in the business were in the office of the *Salem Gazette*. After a disagreement there, he “quit work on account of dissatisfaction with a two-faced foreman.” [W. B. Hammond journal, Sept. 10. 1857] Shortly after, he went to work for his cousin Stephen Blaney and also for Lewis W. Elliott. In 1859, he accepted a position at the *South Danvers Wizard*.

His work at the *Wizard* earned him the friendship and respect of both Charles D. Howard, the publisher, and Fitch Poole, the editor.

More importantly for William, his new position gave him the stability to offer marriage to the woman he loved, Georgiana Staples of Haverhill.

When the war began, William did not enlist at once. Perhaps he thought, as just about everyone else did, that it would soon be over. More

likely, he didn’t want to leave his new wife and baby daughter, Susie, so soon after her birth. By the end of the summer of 1861, it became clear that the war would not be dealt with as quickly as many hoped. And despite Susie only being six months old, William joined the 24th Massachusetts Infantry on Oct. 9 as a private. He served in that regiment for three years, fighting in numerous engagements, including the Battles at Roanoke Island, Secessionville, Fort Wagner and the Siege at Petersburg. During his three years of service, he became one of the *Wizard*’s most regular contributors.

Upon his return to South Danvers, he once again set to work as a printer. After his wife’s death, though, he moved to Georgetown where he met his second wife, Mary L. DeWolfe. They married and in 1879 had a daughter Bessie. William went on to found the *Georgetown Advocate* which he published until his death in 1895.

“One man by my side was shot through the head killing him instantly. He had just risen on his knees and discharged his piece, when down he fell, without uttering a groan. His name was Vincent, a blacksmith by trade, and belonged in Chelsea. He was the only member of our company killed, although many had very narrow escapes. In our regiment, there were about 12 either killed or mortally wounded, and about 38 slightly wounded, whose recovery is not considered doubtful. . . .”

William Blaney Hammond’s
March 17, 1862 letter to
the *Wizard*

“I am no longer a private under Captain Austin, at least for the present, but am released for special duty . . . Now I suppose you would like to know how I came to have such a privilege granted as that, so I will tell you. Friday morning, April 11, as I was sitting in my tent, I heard Lieut. Edmonds inquire of someone which tent I quartered in. I thought to myself what mischief have I been doing now that I have got to account for? But he popped his head in, and told me to pack my things and report for special duty at the “Progress” office. So after breakfast. . . I went to see what kind of trap I was going to get into. I walked into the office as any printer would, went up to the presses and looked at them, then poked along to the typos to see what kind of set they were, when I had the pleasure of shaking hands with Benjamin Arrington, one of my fellow apprentices at the Gazette office. It was by his recommendation that I was sent for. Liking the look of things, I ‘hailed off my coat and rolled up my sleeves’ and into the metal I pitched.”

William Blaney Hammond’s April 13, 1862 letter to the *Wizard*.

Sarah Gloyd, 1747-1845

"An old dilapidated one story building about 16 feet square leaning against a gravelly knoll, with two small sashed diamond glass windows—one in the southern front and another opposite in the back side. The west end was occupied by a chimney and fire place sufficiently large to accommodate the whole family in its corners. Opposite the chimney in the east end was the door, with a wooden latch (string always pulled in) and several curious substitutes for bolts and locks dangling about it. In this room was a bed, trundle bed, two or three wheels for spinning linen tow and cards, pails, pots and kettles, warming pan, frying pan and &c's of housekeeping. In irregular festoons about the walls were spider webs. . . and numerous bundles of medicinal herbs promiscuously assorted therewith, an old chest of drawers, a table and several chairs, blocks and benches."

Description of the Gloyd house in the March 29, 1845 Danvers Eagle

—In contrast to the previous two stories, the tale of Sarah Gloyd is one of poverty and sadness. Her mark upon our town is one most people would as soon forget. But then, that is often the case for the poor. However, their stories also deserved to be remembered.

Sarah Gloyd lived for nearly a full century. Yet long life offered little enjoyment. From her birth in an old shack near Beaver Brook to her last years at the Danvers Almshouse, clutching what few pennies she had left, she knew little beyond fear and suspicion.

Her tale begins months before her birth. Even then, misery stalked her. Her father, Ebenezer Gloyd, was known to be a cheerful man and enjoyed spending time with others. But on this March 1747 morning, he left home to cut wood for the family which consisted of his wife and daughter, Hannah, age 8. In his haste to join his fellows at the Middleton Tavern, he decided to risk crossing the ice on the Middleton Pond. The ice broke and he drowned.

Word of the tragedy was delivered to Mrs. Gloyd, causing an already timid woman to become even more withdrawn.

When Sarah was born a few months later, she was nursed as much on fear and superstition as she was on her mother's milk. Tales abounded of Mrs. Gloyd's attempts to keep intruders, real or imagined, from entering her home. The chimney was often stuffed with thorn bushes. And over the door and two windows were horseshoes to keep the witches at bay.

In the years after Ebenezer Gloyd's death, the widow and her two daughters subsisted on the money they earned from spinning as well as on the charity of neighbors. But as the girls grew, the benevolence of those around them shrank. Many believed two able-bodied girls should be able to support their mother and themselves. Whether they could have or not is unknown. Because soon after, Sarah took to her bed, overcome by an unknown ailment. Most felt her physical illness to be feigned. What was not feigned was the depth of their estrangement from others in

the town.

When Mrs. Gloyd finally followed her husband into death in 1788, the sisters found it impossible to say goodbye to her. And so they kept her with them, until neighbors became alerted to just how far things had deteriorated. Mrs. Gloyd was finally buried.

And afterward, Sarah became as withdrawn and eccentric as her mother had been. Any visits from concerned neighbors sent Sarah to her bed, overcome with numerous complaints. Her mistrust of others brought mistrust upon herself. Those with kindly hearts viewed her as peculiar. The rest saw her as someone to be reviled.

One of the common occurrences which evoked the annoyance of the Gloyd sisters was that of the Danvers Militia passing their home on its way to the Plains for training. Each time they marched by, the militia fired their muskets, either in salute or merely to annoy the women, only they know for sure. During one of these times, the salute shattered their window, causing a piece of glass to fly into Sarah's eye. Whether or not she had been ill before, Sarah was indeed unwell now.

Upon Hannah's death in 1800, the town wondered what would become of Sarah. Benjamin Putnam offered to care for her if the town agreed to attach a small room to his home for her. It was agreed and the addition built. But Sarah's complaints intensified. Rose bugs had infested her. She was afflicted by frostbite in the summer. Finally, even Mr. Putnam could no longer bear beneath the strain of her care. And in 1806, she was carried against her will to the old Almshouse which was located on the corner of Central and Elm. She stayed there for a few years until the town bought the old Samuel Nurse farm on Lynnfield Street. And there, Sarah wiled away her days by smoking her pipe and mending her threadbare clothes.

Her last move to the new Almshouse in 1843 brought a new round of complaints from her. And not long after, her life ended as sad and as miserable as it had began.

From Near and Far

"I suppose you have read all about the battle in which we were engaged last Monday . . . It was discovered Sunday morning that the rebels had left Yorktown, but we did not get started in pursuit until one o'clock. I cannot say anything about the works at Yorktown, only that they were very strong and evidently planned by a skillful engineer. Torpedoes had been buried in many places, but very few of them did us any injury. . . . We had no artillery but the rebels soon opened fire with theirs, and almost at the first round a shot went crashing through the ranks of the 2d N.H. I saw one man fall with his leg shot off. He died in a few minutes—the bullets went over our heads. . . . With half a dozen others, including our 1st Lieut., I remained behind a large butt where the cannon balls and shells came dangerously near. A limb, three inches in diameter, within six feet of me, was cut off and thrown down just behind me. In about half an hour the artillery came up and was placed in position at the edge of the fallen timber in the clearing, but the men refused to work the guns on account of the hot fire which was directed upon them."

From Henry Whittemore's May 8th, 1862 letter to the *Wizard*

"This morning brings us into the Gulf Stream where the water is warmer and of a more beautiful blue, and a strong current northerly. Capt. M. hauled up some of the water in a bucket for me to put my hand in and it felt quite warm. . . . Nor stormy petrels or anything else on the water but plenty of sea plants. . . . This afternoon the wind blows fresher and the swell is still greater than before. Such fine foam-crested waves it would make you leap to see. If I had known how much there was to see and learn on the ocean I could hardly have been contented on the land."

From Oct. 26, 1846 letter from William Poole to his parents, Fitch and Mary Ann Poole, regarding his voyage to Cuba to recover from tuberculosis

Dear Father: It has been some time since I have written to you; and there have been many changes in the army during that time.

I believe when I last wrote to you, we were at New Market, about two miles from Fortress Monroe. We marched onto Yorktown, after shoveling and picking until we were about worn out. Our labors did not amount to anything but evacuation on the part of the Rebels; after they had carried off all that was of any value to them or us. . . . They were in hopes of getting our Baggage Train. They fought to get it; we fought hard to save it, and did, but with great loss of life. One think I know, we killed four of them, where they killed one of our men. The fight at Gaine's Hill commenced at about 11 o'clock Friday June 27th, and kept up until dark. We fought all this time without being relieved, while the Rebels were relieved by fresh brigades every hour. We drove them twice, but the third time they came up with fresh troops, while we were out of ammunition, and our ranks so thinned that it was impossible to hold it any longer. We had not had any sleep, nor anything but a little hard bread, for three days and nights, and were all tired out; besides, we had no officers left to give orders or anything else. Our regiment was the very last to leave the battle-field, and what there is left of us came very near to being all taken prisoners. . . . It was in this fight that our Colonel was killed, also Capt. Dunning. Our company went into the fight with 63 men and came out with only 21 left; since then 3 more have come up, the rest are killed, wounded and missing. I am in hopes some more will turn up one of these days.

Samuel Pray's July 18th, 1862 letter to his father.

"Time passes away, as it must, rather slowly to me. I have so little to occupy myself with, although to look back, the winter seems about as short as any former one. I have become so accustomed the manner of living here, that I fancy I shall feel rather strange at first when I get into more civilized regions, if indeed the voyage does not extract the slight infusions of Spanish from me. I anticipate a very tedious voyage and the very last part of it into Boston harbor will probably seem as long as all the rest. I am sorry the new Danvers Railroad will not be completed before my arrival, for I already begin to dread a ride of 45 minutes before reaching Salem. And then a ride nearly as long in the Hourly is dreadful to contemplate!

William Poole's March 28, 1846 letter to his parents Fitch and Mary Ann Poole before returning home from Cuba.

Dear Mother: Having a few moments to spare, I thought I would write you a few lines to let you know how we are. I am as well as ever, and I hope these few lines will find you the same. I hear from some of the boys that you worried considerably about me when you heard that I was wounded. Now, I don't want you to worry at all for I am not hurt yet; all the wound I got was merely a scratch. I suppose you have heard that our regiment has been in another battle. This time our regiment, and all our brigade, suffered pretty bad.

We had a considerable number killed and wounded. I will not be sure when I am writing, for it is hard telling, who was killed, but I believe Sergeant Shaw was killed and John Smith of South Danvers. There were also quite a number killed from other places. Gustavus Larrabee was wounded pretty bad in the head, and Geo. Trask was wounded in the arm. I believe that were all from South Danvers. Our Captain was wounded . . . Our Major was killed, . . . I lost my gun in the fight—a ball struck it and bent the barrel.

Charles A. Brown's July 5th, 1862 letter to his mother